

fires such as the ones we are experiencing do to the same species.

I spoke to one firefighter last week. He told me that the 150-foot flames in the Mission Ridge fire were traveling so fast and were so intense that birds in flight were actually being burned out of the air. Certainly, most small animals that are land animals have no chance at all. That includes the spotted owl, the red squirrel, Preble's meadow jumping mouse, and hundreds of animals on the endangered species list.

In arguing against thinning, environmentalists also ignore the very real long-term damage that large and intense fires have on soil and watersheds. Over 70 percent of our Nation's water comes from waterbodies in our forests. Yet, these environmental groups would prohibit thinning around watersheds, such as the South Platte project. I would have thought that they would support such efforts, especially after the Buffalo Creek fire of 1996, which cost the city of Denver millions of dollars to restore water quality.

Environmentalists oppose improving the safety of our watersheds because they fear losing the Clinton-era "roadless rule," which provides that no new roads can be built where none exist. Their prized "roadless rule" effectively acts as a wilderness designation requiring an act of Congress.

It is ironic that the "roadless rule" that environmentalists hold so dear was recently ruled illegal by a Federal judge in Idaho because the public comment period was grossly inadequate, stating, "Justice hurried on a proposal of this magnitude is Justice denied."

I am a big supporter of grass roots initiatives—local communities should be involved in land management decisions. Opportunities for public comment and participation are important aspects of environmental law. However, these opportunities are being poisoned by radical groups too interested in legitimizing their own worth to contributors than in collaboratively working for the betterment of our Nation's resources.

Some of these organizations have effectively paralyzed responsible forest management practices, thus contributing to poor forest health. In fact, 73 million acres of national forest are at risk from severe wildland fires. In the West, more than half of the rangeland riparian area on the National Forest System do not meet standards for healthy watersheds, and one in six acres in the Rocky Mountain and Plains states is making no progress toward improvement. All this in the name of environmentalism.

Forest Service Chief Dale Bosworth recently acknowledged that the Hayman Fire near Denver would not have been nearly as severe had forest thinning projects gone forward.

I am unwilling to allow our forest's health and environmental quality to continue deteriorating simply because a minority of environmental organiza-

tions have thrown science and good sense out of the window in the name of their own political agenda while completely avoiding the tragedy of the 14 deaths of firefighters from the Storm King Fire of 1994 or the recent loss of five firefighters in a bus wreck while on their way to fight fire in Colorado.

I have seen the negative effect that some environmental organizations have had in the West for a long time. But enough is enough—something has to change. It is unfortunate that it has taken tragic fires like the ones raging out West to get the Nation and the media to acknowledge the same.

I hope, as we move from this Congress to the next, we will look for more positive ways to achieve responsible forest management.

With that, I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. DAYTON). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senator from Delaware, Mr. CARPER, be recognized for 3 minutes as in morning business.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Delaware is recognized for 3 minutes.

#### AMTRAK

Mr. CARPER. Mr. President, the attention of a lot of people in the Northwest and in the Midwest and in California has been drawn to the potential shutdown not just of the Amtrak passenger rail service, but commuter rail service in Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Wilmington, Delaware, Chicago, Los Angeles, and a lot of places in between.

Amtrak has sought to negotiate a loan from a consortium of private lenders. Literally in the middle of the negotiation, the administration put on the table its restructuring plan for Amtrak. That plan was, in my view, a "dismantling" plan for Amtrak. That was the end of the negotiations with the private lenders, for the most part.

Now Amtrak faces a difficult decision as to when to begin curtailing and shutting down its operations. When they do that, it will have a cascading effect on the operations of many commuter railroads in America as well.

The Secretary of the Department of Transportation, Norman Mineta, was before one of our committees today testifying. Knowing him as an old colleague and somebody who I respect, I think he is in a tough spot. I have not been inside his heart to see what he would want to do in his heart. Given that independence, I think he would

favor going ahead with the loan guarantee, or support the Congress in going through and including a \$200 million emergency supplemental for Amtrak. The administration, which created this crisis before us, is now still in a very good position to end the crisis, the threat. They can do that by saying, yes, we will provide the full loan guarantee, or we will support the appropriation from the Congress.

Our thanks to the chairman of the Appropriations Committee, Senator BYRD, and Senator STEVENS, the ranking Republican, for their willingness to support \$200 million in the emergency supplemental to help us get through this difficult time, and later this fall we will resolve more fully the passenger rail service in this country.

I have said for a long time—and I will say it again today—the problem with passenger rail service in this country is we have never provided adequate capital support for passenger rail service. We need to do that, to find an earmark source of revenue. I hope in the months to come we will debate that and come to a consensus on that point.

I thank the Chair.

#### UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST— H.R. 3009

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Chair lay before the Senate a message from the House with respect to H.R. 3009; that the Senate disagree to the House amendment, agree to the request for a conference with the House on the disagreeing votes of the two Houses; and that the Chair be authorized to appoint conferees on behalf of the Senate: three on behalf of the majority and two on behalf of the minority.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. LOTT. Reserving the right to object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Republican leader.

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, we have had a number of discussions with respect to how many conferees the Senate would want to have involved in this very important conference that will deal with trade issues on which we spent a great deal of time in the Senate, including the Andean trade authority, as well as the overall large trade assistance bill and the Trade Promotion Act—three very important pieces included in this one bill.

As we look at this, I think this is going to be one of the most important conferences we are going to deal with this year.

The House has a small number of conferees to the underlying bill, but they have a number of conferees to different sections to the bill. I suspect there is a total number of House conferees involved that would probably run in the 18 range.

We have members of the Finance Committee who worked very hard on this important legislation, and I had